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L E T T E R

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The Reverend Doctor WHITE:

CONTAINING,

R E M A R K S

Upon certain Passages in the Notes subjoined
to his BAMPTON LECTURES.

BY PHILALETHES.

DEDICATED TO THE USE OF

Doctor WHITE's ADMIRERS.

L O N D O N.

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M.DCC.LXXXIX

LETTER

TO THE
Reverend Doctor W. H. W.

REVEREND SIR

THE people of England, perhaps never so
more anxious to see the cause of
the just cause and administration of justice
upon your Bampton Lectures. The
Lectures are given in the most
genius, or are the most production of intellect
your Literary Friends, is a man of whom the
world at large is not much indebted. As a
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them, the world will not blame you for
giving in assistance, as for your not-otherwise
your obligations. That Mr. Bampton has
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Reverend Doctor WHITE.

REVEREND SIR,

THE people of England, perhaps, never did more credit to their discernment, than in the just praise and admiration they have bestowed upon your Bampton Lectures.—Whether those Lectures are entirely the production of your own genius, or are the joint production of yourself and your Literary Friends, is a matter in which the world at large is not much interested. As Christianity is likely to derive great advantage from them, the world will not blame you so much for calling in assistance, as for your not acknowledging YOUR OBLIGATIONS. That Mr. BADCOCK had some concern in them, the publication of Dr. GABRIEL has placed beyond a doubt: and the character of Mr. BADCOCK, as an enemy to Socinianism, and his spleen against his *quondam* friend, Dr. PRIESTLEY, have induced some people to sus-

pect that the Note, p. 60. on a passage in the 341st page of the Bampton Lectures, is the composition of that gentleman. I may not perhaps be reckoned uncivil, in the present state of things, if I request that you will oblige the world with a candid declaration how this fact stands; and be pleased to add, whether you heartily adopt the sentiments contained in that note,

At any rate, permit me to observe, that the case of the Socinians is by no means fairly represented there. You say—"The objections of both (*that is*, of Mahometans and Socinians) to this sublime mystery (of the Trinity) proceed on the same presumptions—an appeal to reason." Now, I do not pretend to deny that Socinians sometimes make their appeal to Reason; but I do aver that their appeal is not to Reason only, but chiefly to the Holy Scriptures: And I conceive it would be a difficult matter to shew, that where Scripture-evidence is in their favour, they are not justified in calling in the assistance of *Reason* to explain it; thus making Scripture the Guide, and Reason the Interpreter.

I cheerfully agree with you, that Revelation is given to supply the defects of natural knowledge: But perhaps the defects we find in the rational powers of men, do not arise so much from the natural imperfection of our reason, as from the prevailing influence of early education. — Opinions taken up upon credit, as most opinions are, in the belief of which

which men have been educated, (however absurd, or however impious they may be) are nourished and caressed with as great tenderness and affection, as the most irreproachable opinions would be.

You admit, (page 77. of your Lectures) that prejudices derived from early education, and confirmed by habit, become, as it were, interwoven with our very constitution. It is, Sir, more owing to this inveterate prejudice of education, than to any natural defects of our reason, that men so inflexibly and tenaciously maintain and defend opinions, which are both disgraceful to the honour and majesty of God, and destructive of the interests of men.—If we look abroad into the world, we may behold, in various parts of it, direful instances of *the ignorance of human beings*, arising from neglect of their rational powers; but very few, if any, that arise from the due exercise of them. We can see men so nearly on a level with the brute creation, that the only observable difference is, that they are more vicious, and more depraved: the little superior knowledge they have, serves only as the pander of vice, and the instrument of oppression. Is not this awfully the case in barbarous and uncivilized communities, where there are scarce any traces left of the knowledge of the Supreme Being, or of the rights or duties of humanity?—From what other source is it, that we see them worshipping gods which themselves have created—that we see them cherishing the
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most implacable revenge, and pursuing, with infernal violence, the misery and destruction of each other?

Nay, let us look back but a few centuries into our own country, and we shall see the same deplorable ignorance, arming its barbarous inhabitants against every principle and sentiment which could honour the great Creator, adorn their own nature, or tend to promote their happiness.—And it is pretty clear, that we may impute the extravagance of some popular religious opinions, and the astonishing predilection men entertain for them, even in this day, to some remains of this savage ignorance*. May we not suppose, that men could not embrace and contend for opinions which disgrace the Supreme Being, are totally destitute of the warrant of Scripture, and are at war with the plainest dictates of reason and common-sense, if the most perverse ignorance had not some hand in the delusion! A position like this is truly humbling to human nature, as it discovers its imperfections in the visionary and bigotted speculatist. And the charge will sit most uneasily on the shoulders of those to whom it most belongs to

* Hear the excellent language of LACTANTIUS, lib. ii. cap. 7. *Oportet in ea re maxime, &c.* He tells us, that it is the especial duty of us all, in matters which chiefly concern our life, to confide in ourselves; and rather with our own judgment, and our proper senses, endeavour to find out and weigh the Truth, than, believing the decrees of others, be deceived, as those who are void of reason. God has given to all (says he) their share of wisdom, that they may both enquire into and weigh that which they hear.

feel it. The honest, unprejudiced, and intelligent, will join issue with the representation ; and at the same time that they deplore the ignorance of others, will endeavour to find some traces of it in themselves ; for no other purpose, but that they may, by the most unremitting attention, utterly destroy it.

To a mind under the enlightening influences of true religion, nothing appears more strange, than that men, in other respects liberal, wise, and learned, should adopt systems of religious faith so full of folly and impiety, as we see they do. So foolish and impious are many of them, that a mind thus enlightened could not give credit to the fact, that men did so believe, if it were not too visible to be denied ; and if it had not experienced in itself some remains of the same corruption of the human mind. And it is in this view of things only, that we can credit the extreme blindness of the human understanding, as it has shewn itself in all nations of idolators. It is in viewing the blindness and perverseness of prejudice in this meridian of light and knowledge, that we can believe that reasonable beings would worship, as the supreme source of their blessings, the works of their own hands !

It is confessed on all hands, that the SUPREME BEING, is in his nature or person INCOMPREHENSIBLE. All labour, therefore, to find out God *to perfection*, must be in vain. But it is equally true, that although God is so incomprehensible, yet it is our duty

duty to attend to such discoveries of the Divine Nature as the volume of Revelation affords us. The Trinitarian claims the Scriptures as the source of his opinion—"That God is perfectly THREE, although he is absolutely ONE;" as do the Opposers of that doctrine, (although you affect to doubt it)—"That God is simply, only, and absolutely ONE."—It is by the exercise of our reason that we must judge and determine, whether that Revelation teaches the one doctrine, or the other. And in the investigation of these respective claims, our understandings and judgments will be influenced by the probability, or improbability of the fact: So much so, that if there be any thing of repugnancy or contradiction in its appearances, it will require by so much a greater degree of evidence, both as to quantity and perspicuity, in order to work an effectual conviction of its truth.

And although it be true, that the nature of God is inscrutable by us dim-sighted mortals; yet we know enough of God to know, that there cannot be in his nature or substance a contradiction. We are sure that neither in the Supreme Being, or any other being, does exist, that which in the nature of things cannot exist.

Perhaps, if we were to search the world through for the most glaring instances of impiety, profaneness and absurdity, we should find none superior, probably none equal, to that which almost universally prevails

prevails among the disciples of the blessed Jesus—and to which you seem so warmly attached—which teaches that their Master and Saviour was, in his OWN PERSON, the eternal, immortal, invisible, and only wise GOD.

If we were to suppose for a moment, that such a doctrine had never been taught, we should find it truly difficult to conceive that it could ever find a place in the human understanding. Let us form to ourselves the idea we should entertain, if we had arrived to mature thought and reflection, and had never heard that the eternal Majesty of Heaven, the Creator of all things, and Supreme Disposer of events, had assumed human flesh, had resided with mankind as a man in all things like to them, and should then have a religion offered to our reception, of which this was one of its fundamental articles—Would not our minds revolt at the thought?—Should we not reject, with indignation, a religion which would bear such formidable and incredible appearances? No doubt we should; and the impression would form indelible characters of horror upon the mind, such as would make us ever after regard it with increasing aversion.

But so it is, that however disgusting such a doctrine is—however near the belief of it approaches to the folly of those, who worship strange gods, the work of men's hands—however the belief of such a doctrine would stand as perfect evidence of the

puerile state of the human mind—however it debases the majesty of the Supreme Being, or tends to render incredible the religion which teaches it—yet so it is, I say, that this doctrine has its humble votaries, its zealous advocates, its ardent admirers.

Let us, Sir, consider the real tenor of the doctrine of the Trinity, and see whether it be credible and worthy of acceptance, or not.

This doctrine maintains that there is one living and true God; but that this one God is not *one* person, but *three*—that this God is not so simply *one*, as that he is *altogether one*—that in his persons, or personal relations, he is *three*; but that in his nature or essence, he is *one*.—That these persons are known by the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.—That the Father, though he is the same God with the Son and Holy Ghost, is not either the Son or Holy Ghost—That the Son, though he is the same God with the Father, is not either the Father or Holy Ghost—That the Holy Ghost is the same one God with the Father and Son; and yet that the Holy Ghost is not either the Father or Son—That the essence of each of them is the essence of the Father, and of all of them; but that the person of the one is not the person of either of the others.

If we will but exercise our rational powers, they will lead us to discover, from this state of the doctrine, that the whole of it rests upon a distinction of
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the *nature* from the *persons* of God ; and shews—That God is a compound Being, part nature, part person—That this composition is at least four-fold ; *one* essence, *three* persons—That God is at the same time three and one, or only one, and yet more than one.

These, it must be admitted, are strange problems, precisely opposed to all we know, or hear, or see ; at war with universal nature, and violations of the most obvious dictates of reason and common sense.—It is surely then our duty to enquire, where is the evidence of the fact ? We debase ourselves, if we sit down tamely to the faith of such notions, without asking, where are we taught this wondrous, this inexplicable creed ?

It cannot be, that God is simply and absolutely one, and yet that he is *more* than one ; or that God is truly and properly three, and yet that he is perfectly one. This, I say, *cannot* be true ; because it would be the same thing as to say, that three and one are *the same* number ; or, in other words, that three units are *no more* than one unit ; or that one unit is *equal* in number to three ; which is a direct denial of that fundamental maxim of Truth—“ That that proposition is true, which is agreeable or answers to the nature of the thing, of which any thing is affirmed or denied.”—The position in question therefore, every one must see, is not a matter merely *above* reason ; but expressly *contrary* to reason and

the truth.—Let our knowledge of the eternal Majesty of Heaven, be ever so confined, we know that he cannot be three persons and one person, or three natures and one nature, or three persons and one nature; unless, indeed, in this last place, it can be proved, that the persons exist independently of the nature, and of course are distinct from it.

This then cannot be a doctrine taught in the Scriptures; inasmuch as those writings cannot offer any thing to us as matter of faith, which it is impossible we *can* believe.

I have observed, Sir, that the whole doctrine rests upon a distinction of the *nature* from the *persons* of God: For if God be only *one* in nature, but *three* in persons, we must admit either that *one* and *three* are the same number, which is a contradiction in terms; or, in order to avoid that contradiction, that the nature of God is different from the persons of God. Admit, for a moment, that the latter is true, for the former *cannot* be so; and then we must seek for the proof of it, either in *Revelation*, or in *Reason*.

You certainly will not deny, that it is among our highest and most important duties, to enquire, whether this distinction of the *nature*, from the *persons* of God, be taught, enforced, and maintained in the *Scriptures*, or not; and that this enquiry must

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be conducted by the exercise of that reason, which you treat with so much indignity.—Let the Scriptures be thus examined; and I pledge myself, that there will not be found one *book*, one *chapter*, one *verse*, one *sentence*, or even one *word*, that teaches, or that is even favourable to this position!

And if it is not to be found in the Scriptures, permit me to ask you, Sir, What does REASON say? Does Reason teach it, or countenance it? Certainly not. Every principle of Reason—every principle and dictate of Common sense, oppose it. Reason tells us, that if the persons of God are distinct from the essence of God, then the essence of God is not the persons of God. It tells us, that this notion teaches a composition, or perhaps rather a conjunction in God: for if the persons are not the same as the nature, the Deity must be either compounded of nature and person—or the nature and the persons must be conjoined. Take which we will. and we must either give up the doctrine, or relinquish our senses.

If you, Sir, dispute these facts, let me intreat you to shew where the Scriptures teach the above distinctions, or how it is that Reason justifies them?

Every uninfluenced mind will confess, that we should with great caution give credit to any position which has the appearance of repugnancy—that we should admit it only upon *distinct*, *explicit*, and *ample* evidence

evidence—and that we are bound to reject it, if such evidence cannot be adduced in its support: Evidence being the only mark or criterion of Truth.

Let us apply these rules to the doctrine of the Trinity, and see whether it will bear up against the charge of contradiction; and whether the distinction held out by Trinitarians, of the persons from the being and essence of God, be a distinction which the Scriptures avow.

Now the truth clearly is, that the distinction of the essence from the persons of God, is not founded in the nature of things; and this will appear from a variety of considerations — particularly from this leading one—That there is not *in fact* any distinction of *essence* from *nature* or *being*: that the distinction is not *real*, but *imaginary*; a mere verbal distinction; every rational agent being, in the same sense, both a *being* and a *person*.

Nay, if we appeal to the distinction between essence and person, according to the common use of language, (for this is indeed a doctrine rather of words than in deed) the word *person* will be found more properly applicable to the *subject* spoken of, than the terms *substance* or *essence* are; and that from this farther consideration, that we never speak of the person of a substance, or the person of an essence, or the person of a nature; but frequently of the essence,

fence, substance, or nature of a PERSON; and not unfrequently of the essence, substance, or nature of a BEING, which brings *person* and *being* into one class, and makes *person* or *being* the *substratum* of properties; and essence, substance or nature, the qualities, attributes, or properties of person, rather than the essential intelligent being itself.—And that they differ more in words than in fact, is plain from this circumstance also, that ESSENCE is sometimes defined “*being, or a person which has existence*”—PERSON is defined to be “*a human being*”—and NATURE is defined “*a distinct species, or kind of being.*”

These points duly attended to, will present a curious observation to the view, which carries the tenet we are considering, still further from reason, and nature. It is this:—that Trinitarians have unfortunately taken the wrong side of the question; and instead of following the common use of language, by contending for a plurality of natures in a singular person, they have reversed the order of things, and perverted the use of words*, by teaching that the

* It is worthy of attentive observation, that in describing the person of CHRIST, Trinitarians have adopted this other side of the question; and do actually speak of him as having a *plurality* of NATURES in a *single* PERSON. He is, say they, “*God of the substance of the Father---Man of the substance of his mother;*” and yet that “*he is not TWO, but ONE Christ*”---two essences, or natures, in one person.—See this very definition in BAMPTON LECTURES, p. 19. of the Notes. 2d Edit.

Deity is ONE in *essence, substance, or nature*; and that in this one nature are THREE persons.

Should you be inclined to controvert these observations, and to plead for your own position; I have no wish, but to have the controversy determined by the ORACLES of TRUTH. This no one who bears the Christian name, can object to; and this naturally induces a call upon you, as a learned advocate for Trinitarian mysteries, to justify your system, by a candid and familiar appeal to the Scriptures.—This common decency calls upon you to do: this you are bound to by the sacred principles of humanity. And 'till you have shewn that the Scriptures clearly and repeatedly teach, not only that there is in the one undivided Deity, a plurality, but that this plurality, is a plurality of *persons* in a unity of *essence*; you must bear with those who do not believe so improbable a tale.—For this the Scriptures have hitherto been examined in vain; the search has hitherto led to a perfect conviction, that the Scriptures never, in any one instance, (strange as it may appear!)—I repeat it, the Scriptures never, IN ANY ONE INSTANCE, distinguish the persons of God from the essence of God, or ever discover the most remote allusion to, or hint at any such distinction. For the sake of Truth, and for the sake of Common Sense, do tell the world where you have gained your information, and why it is you believe it.

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To men uninfluenced by prejudice or interest, this defect of evidence must appear indisputably fatal.—If the Scriptures do not make the distinction in question, that distinction being the very sum of the dispute, laying at the very foundation of the doctrine, nay, being **THE VERY DOCTRINE AND POSITION ITSELF**; it will follow, (and all the wit and sophistry in the universe, cannot prevent its following) that the doctrine of the Trinity is a mere human invention, and therefore ought to be for ever rescinded from the Christian's creed.

That which is to be opposed to this notion, and which brings to its height this great and momentous argument, is this—That in every instance in the Scriptures, where God is spoken of, he is spoken of as *one only* PERSON. So far are the Scriptures from teaching that the person of God is more than one—(the world should be informed of the fact) that every pronoun* used of God in the Scriptures, is of the **SINGULAR NUMBER**, (except in two or three instances, where he is figuratively represented as deliberating in council) which could not have

* Pronouns are words used instead of Names, and are called *personal Names*, because they *belong* to the *person*, and differ in number, according as a single person, or several persons, is or are represented as speaking, or spoken of or to.---Every pronoun therefore, in the *singular number*, which in the Scriptures is used of the Divine Being, is a proof that there is *but ONE person* in God.---And this will furnish us with many thousand proofs, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not true.

been the case, without a train of the most egregious and inexcusable solecisms that ever disgraced a literary composition, if the Divine Being is not PERSONALLY ONE.

The Trinitarian, defeated in this grand instance, will fly to some of his usual out-posts, and contend, that he does not mean that in God there is a trinity of persons, in the common and usual sense of the word PERSON; as that word signifies, an intelligent agent.—But this will by no means remedy the difficulty; the objection still remains in its full vigour: for the Scriptures do no more speak of any other *distinction*, which can possibly bear, in *any sense*, the denomination of *persons*, than it does speak of persons in the usual sense of that word.

Indeed, this paltry evasion of the force of Truth, is chargeable with a difficulty, which makes it a remedy infinitely worse than the disease.—It is open to every man's observation—level with every man's comprehension. It is this:—That if the ever-blessed God be one in essence, but not strictly three in persons, or three intelligent agents; *i. e.* if neither the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Ghost be PERSONS, in the highest sense of that word—then it will follow with the utmost certainty, and the whole world cannot avert the awful consequence; it will follow, I say——“That on the Trinitarian hypothesis, the Supreme Being is not a *Person* or *Being* at all:” And so we
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are led into Atheism, into WRETCHED and FOR-
LORN ATHEISM!

And I will go still farther, and add, That if the received doctrine of the Trinity be a truth, then the Supreme Being is not a simple and uncompounded Being; but a compounded Being, a Being composed of parts.—If the persons inhere in the essence, and are not distinct from it, then the Divine Being must be at least composed of three parts; the person of the Father, the person of the Son, and the person of the Holy Ghost.—It is true, says the Trinitarian, that there are three persons in God; but they are all one God. But I ask, is the person of the Son, the same as the person of the Father, or of the Holy Ghost? If neither of them are the others, they must be either distinct or separate—and then there must either be a conjunction, by the union of three parts*, or there must be three Gods. And thus we ascribe to God gross IMPERFECTION, or fall into IDOLATRY; which, says *Clemens Alexandrinus*, is—“the dividing of God, from one into many.”

The doctrine of the Trinity, then, is a position totally unknown to the Scriptures, totally destitute of evidence, or even the appearance of evidence;

* Nothing less than such a distinction as will make the persons and essence really distinguishable, or more than one in number, will answer any end to get rid of the contradictions charged upon the doctrine of the Trinity, that it makes one and three the same number.

involved in manifest profaneness and impiety, and altogether irrational and absurd.

And if the doctrine of the Trinity be in its own nature impious, irrational and absurd, and there be not distinct and explicit evidence of its truth—to what strange infatuation shall we ascribe the zeal and ardency, which some men shew in its defence?—The time will come, when this doctrine will no longer be used as the engine of priestcraft, to promote ignorance and superstition; the time will come, when the worship of false gods will be done away, and when the knowledge of the one living and true God will cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea!

There is, Sir, but one effectual means by which this event can be protracted; which is, that the human mind be kept fast bound by the chains of ignorance, or, which is the same thing, locked supinely in the arms of implicit faith.—In proportion as men shall form the manly and virtuous resolution, of thinking for themselves, in that proportion will they suspect the validity of this doctrine; and when interest and prejudice shall cease to influence the mind, it will be rejected with astonishment, indignation, and horror.

It is not without some grounds that you complain of the weakness of the human understanding; for strange and absurd as the doctrine of the Trinity may appear, it is enrobed with innocence, when
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compared with what follows from it, in the modern doctrine of the divinity of Christ.—Here, Sir, a dismal field is opened to our view. Here we may discover most awful defections from the Truth.—The wit and invention of man, for more than fifteen hundred years, have been on the rack, in first introducing the doctrine of the supreme deity of Jesus Christ into the world, and since in endeavours to reduce it to the *standard* of human comprehension.—this last has hitherto been in vain; and all endeavours of the like nature yet to come, will be alike abortive.

And if we appeal to that other great standard of Christian faith, the BIBLE, we shall find, that there is but one SUPREME GOD, who only hath immortality, who dwells in light inaccessible, whom no eye hath seen, or can see:—That this ever-blessed God commissioned his well-beloved servant Jesus Christ, to restore men to virtue and happiness in this life, and to furnish them with clear prospects of immortality in the next; filling him with wisdom and power to accomplish these great and benevolent purposes.

These doctrines, we can see, have been strangely perverted, and the whole system of Christianity greatly deformed and spoiled of its original beauty and simplicity, by the false philosophy and corrupt wisdom of men. For we are not only told that the
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Supreme Being exists in a three-fold personality, in the unity of the divine essence; but we are told that the eternal God actually became man, in order that, by his death upon the cross, he might restore mankind to the favour and protection of himself.

Every honest man will wish to follow the opinions he holds, into all their obvious consequences, that he may discover what it is he believes: And we will by this rule measure the truth of the doctrine of the personal union of the immortal God, and a mortal man. This rule is certainly commendable and necessary: for without it, we do but, as it were, believe the *name* of the thing, and not the *thing* itself; we possess a mere implicit faith, which wanting the force of conviction, yields not the excellent fruit of an upright conduct, or a peaceful mind.

You must admit, let your prejudice be ever so powerful, that the doctrine we are now considering is not a very probable one; *i.e.* it is not a doctrine which we should be inclined to believe, without some strong evidence of the fact: for if we consider the dignity of that Being of whom we speak, we shall be very much disinclined to believe, that he would adopt a system like this, unless it were the only means his wisdom and goodness could devise. Of course, when we believe it, we must acknowledge, indeed, a great deal of goodness in God,
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who would rather adopt such a means, than leave man unredeemed; but we shall hardly be able to withhold the charge of impotence, when we suppose that no other means could be found out. And thus we go from the improbability of the thing itself, to the impiety of faith in it.

The Athanasian Creed expresses this doctrine in the following terms:—"The right faith is, that we
 "believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the
 "Son of God, is God and man. God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the world;
 "and man, of the substance of his mother, born
 "in the world; perfect God and perfect man, of a
 "reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; equal
 "to the Father as touching his Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching his manhood: who
 "although he be God and man; yet he is not
 "two, but one Christ: One, not by conversion of
 "the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion
 "of substance, but by unity of person. For as the
 "reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and
 "man is one Christ!"

Thus, Sir, we are taught to believe, upon pain of eternal damnation, that the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, became personally united to man—that Christ, notwithstanding this union, was one person only—and that this *one person*, was the *second in the Trinity*. From whence it will follow, that the perfect

fect Man of whom the Creed speaks, was a Man *without a human person*, and so consequently no man at all. And thus in your zeal to make Christ God, you tell us that he was not a MAN.

And this drives us to the necessity of viewing all the actions and sufferings of the Mediator, as the acts and sufferings of the DEITY, because they were *acts* of the *person*, as all actions are; and not the acts of an abstract nature, because no such acts can be.

And is not this doctrine, Sir, impious and profane?—Does not this lessen our ideas of the majesty of God?—Does not the supposition fill our minds with horror?—Is it not totally inconsistent with our notions of the universal dominion, and the supreme glory and dignity of the great Creator?—Does not such a doctrine teach us, that the Supreme Being was put to his last shifts to restore mankind?—Is it not a gross imputation upon his wisdom?—Does it not assure us, that God *could not* devise any other means?—Does it not, at any rate, prove that there were great defects in the original constitution of things, which could eventually make such a measure necessary?—Hearken to the language he uses of himself; and then, if you can, believe it to be true. *Isai. xlii. 5.*—“ Thus saith God the Lord, “ he that created the heavens, and stretched them “ out; he that spread forth the earth, and that “ which cometh out of it: he that giveth breath “ unto

“unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that
“walk therein: I am JEHOVAH, that is my name;
“and my glory will I not give to another.” So
again, Isai. xl. 10——29.

We are told, that the necessity there was for the mediation of one of so dignified a nature, arose from the unremitting rigour of the *Divine Justice*; which, we are informed, cannot submit to the pardon of offenders, without full and perfect satisfaction is made to it, for all the sins of every offender who shall be finally saved.

But does this doctrine bear the marks of Truth? —I am convinced that it is a fanciful conceit, expressly contrary to the whole system of Revelation, and subversive of its great design.

Nay, I do with the utmost cheerfulness and confidence, call upon you to produce an instance, where the Scriptures declare that Divine Justice required full satisfaction—or where it is said, that it was necessary that this satisfaction should be made by an infinite person—or, indeed, where it is said that Divine Justice required any satisfaction at all.—I do aver, (and I challenge the world to prove the contrary) that *there is not a syllable* in the Scripture which teaches any such doctrine. On the contrary, the Supreme Being is constantly represented as willing, and desirous, of receiving the returning and

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repentant aggressor—without any intimation that satisfaction, of any kind, was expected or required.—From what quarter, then, has this information been obtained? Make this, Sir, I pray you, a subject of your serious enquiry, and do not rashly avoid the means of conviction.—By the contrary practice, men shew a fondness for systems, which is totally incompatible with a love of the Truth; and is a conduct the humble and ardent enquirer, neither will nor can submit to.

If we admit for a moment, that a full satisfaction to Divine Justice was necessary—it is certainly a fair question, if it be asked, How such an event could possibly be effected?—The common answer to this question is, that the second person in the Trinity undertook the gracious office; and that it was necessary that it should be so, because none other than an infinite person could make that satisfaction.

But a very material consideration here offers itself; which is—Whether the mind, understanding, and will, of each of the three Divine persons, are one and the same; or whether they are divers? For if they are one, then satisfaction of the Justice of one, would be satisfaction of the Justice of all—And this by no means appears to be a Scripture-doctrine; inasmuch as the law to which men are subject, is constantly represented as the law of the Supreme God, THE FATHER.—Offenders are never spoken
of

of as violaters of the law of the Holy Ghost—Nor is the law, given for the rule of man's conduct, ever said to be the law of the Son.

Again : Does it not totally destroy this professed necessity for the oblation of an infinite Person, that the infinite Person who was offered as a sacrifice, was the same Divine Being who demanded the sacrifice ? — If the Divine Justice could not be appeased without an infinite satisfaction ; then it is, in the strictest sense, impossible that God himself, whose justice was so offended, should himself be offered as a sacrifice to himself, for the making of that satisfaction—For this plain and convincing reason, that such a satisfaction would be mere parade, a mere accommodation, not to say a manifest collusion ; and therefore such an imputation upon the honour and wisdom of God, as we must not by any means admit.

And if the mind, understanding, and will of the three persons are diverse ; the Divine Being, as he is personally denominated the Son and Holy Ghost, must certainly as much need and require satisfaction as the Father ; seeing they are, by the Trinitarian account, all equally partakers of supreme Divinity. But I do not recollect that the Scriptures ever represent either the Son or the Holy Ghost, as ready to avenge the wrongs done to them, or

as either demanding or obtaining satisfaction for such wrongs.

If you dispute the justice of these observations—Ask yourself the question, and give an ingenuous answer to your own conscience, whether you do not, when speaking of the satisfaction of Divine Justice, refer that satisfaction, in your ideas, to the FATHER, and not to the Son, or the Holy Ghost?—And if this be the fact, give me leave to ask you, why it is that you so tenaciously adhere to your present system?—Your answer will probably be, that it is a system which best supports the dignity of God, and best serves the interests of men.—But does it indeed answer these most amiable purposes?—Has it indeed these excellent characters to recommend it?—It will perhaps appear to you a very serious and a very affecting truth, that in my view of things, the orthodox system has nothing comparatively valuable in it; but has an evident tendency to disgrace the Supreme Being, and to disserve the interests of men. And this I believe upon the very best evidence I can have, which is the united voice of Reason and the Holy Scriptures.

You ask, in the language of triumph — “What is there in Christianity, when all its distinguishing doctrines are taken away, that could render it a subject worthy of a particular Revelation?”—I will answer you: There is nothing of it left, where all its distinguishing doctrines are taken away; and therefore,

fore, nothing worthy of a particular Revelation.—But there is a great deal left worthy of a particular Revelation, after all the corruptions which have crept into the Christian church, and which are *called* its distinguishing doctrines, are taken away.—Let any sober and uninfluenced man decide, whether the doctrine of a triform Deity—of a God-man Messiah—and of full satisfaction to Divine Justice rendered by him—are the peculiar doctrines of the Christian Revelation.—Or whether a Revelation that there is but *one* living and true God—that this one Supreme Being, is infinitely wise, powerful, and good—that the good and happiness of his rational creation, is the ultimate object of all his dispensations—that there is a necessity for universal obedience—and that the obedient shall inherit the glories of an eternal world—is the most worthy of God, and carries appearances much more honourable to God and beneficial to man.

Take away, Sir, from Christianity your peculiar doctrines, and it is a much more glorious and consistent display of goodness, than it is with them.—And it will require much more art than you are master of, to convince the world, that a Revelation of the peerless Godhead of the Father, and of his benevolent intentions towards men, in preparing them for and investing them with IMMORTALITY, as arising out of the exceeding great grace of God, and of which they would have been totally ignorant without it, is unworthy of God.

The

The Orthodox System, represents man as disobeying the Divine commands:---It represents God the Father as jealous of his law, as insisting upon satisfaction, or that the whole race should be condemned to incessant and everlasting misery---That God the Son stepped in between Divine wrath and the sinner, united himself to human flesh, and in that state of humiliation died upon the cross: thus making a full and perfect oblation and satisfaction for sin---That believers in these doctrines shall enjoy *a state of eternal happiness*, and unbelievers be doomed to perpetual misery and despair.

The Scripture System, represents mankind in general, as sunk into a state of great ignorance and vice---That God, whose tender mercies are over all his works, in order to restore men to virtue and happiness, commissioned the Lord Jesus Christ, to assure them of his readiness to pardon their offences, upon their repentance and amendment; to assure them of a resurrection from the dead; and that those who patiently continue in well-doing, shall be crowned with immortal existence; but that the wicked, who are blots in the creation, shall be removed out of it, and devoted to endless DESTRUCTION.

A moment's consideration will convince us, which of these two systems best supports the dignity of God.—I confess, Sir, that I cannot but prefer the system of Divine Revelation, to the system of Orthodoxy; in that the one represents the Divine Being in the most amiable and excellent point of view; as infinitely removed from passion and prejudice, and as bringing about the most benevolent purposes, by the most simple and natural means—whereas the other represents the Divine Being as naturally implacable, as rigid in the utmost extreme in his demands of satisfaction, as unwilling to relax in the smallest iota, as requiring a satisfaction which no one could make but himself; and, in fact, it represents him in the monstrous, unnatural,

natural, and degrading character of one, who would rather suffer the rigours of punishment Himself, than that punishment should not take place; and therefore, that God undertook to satisfy his own law and justice, by sustaining, in his own person, the punishment he had denounced against his offending creatures.

A system this, which does in no way whatever recommend itself, as favourable to the dignity of the Supreme Being — And I am persuaded that neither the lures of sophistry can invite, or the thunder of penal laws, or ecclesiastical censures, compel men, who impartially think for themselves, to believe that it is either consistent or honourable.

How then is it that such a system can subserve the interests of men?—I deny that it can either subserve the interests of men, or promote the great cause of Christian Truth; and insist that it has a tendency to weaken or destroy them both.

There are, in my opinion, three manifest and awful evils existing, which have their source in this gloomy, contemptible, and inexplicable view of God, and his dispensations. The one is, that it is the parent of Deism—another, that it prevents the spread of Christianity among Jews and Mahometans—the third, that it prevents the happy effects of Christianity,

Christianity, in reforming the lives of those who do embrace it.

Faith is represented in the gospel, as one of the most essential requisites of the Christian character; and so it certainly is, in the true sense of that word; inasmuch as the blessings God has provided for us in the gospel, can only be received and enjoyed by us, as we believe the great leading truths of that gospel; and these are—"The views it furnishes us with of the divinity of our Lord's mission—of the Divine placability—of man's responsibility—of the consequent necessity of obedience—of the future resurrection of the dead—and of the state of rewards and punishments."—These truths being understood, and unfeignedly believed, have a *natural tendency* to give us honourable and amiable ideas of God—to excite our hopes and fears—to awaken our dormant virtues—and thus to promote the cause of universal obedience, and universal happiness. And so it is that we are said to be *saved* by faith—and that he who *believeth not*, is said to be condemned.

If faith then is of such eminent importance in the Christian system—it must be exceedingly plain, that according to the degree of faith, will be the degree of obedience.—If a man receives the Christian religion with no other evidence than that it was the faith of his forefathers, we have but little reason to hope that the fruit of his faith will be very abundant. If
a man

a man by his own researches into the rational evidences of Christianity, becomes convinced of the truth of it, we may expect a greater abundance of fruit : and perhaps on this ground it is, that we see such a disparity in the moral characters of professing Christians in this day, and in the earliest ages of Christianity—In the one instance, they became Christians by conviction—in the other, they are Christians from fashion and custom.

Faith, or the actual belief of any proposition, has it's very being, from the evidence there is of the truth of that proposition—And according to the clearness of that evidence, will be the degree of faith—and if faith is the source of action, the influence of faith will be determined by the degree of faith.

If this be a just rule—and we were to measure by it the internal merits of the system you espouse—we should have but little reason to expect, in the professors of that system, much of the *work* of FAITH, or of the *labour* of LOVE.—The system I am repro-
bating, is loaded with so many contradictions and repugnancies, and makes such unnatural and un-
amiable representations of the Divine Being, that it greatly impedes the work of reformation in the world, which true Christianity is calculated to promote and secure : and is the principal source of that awful corruption of manners, which universally pre-
vails:

vails.—A man may be convinced from the external evidences of the truth of Christianity, that it is a religion which comes from God ; yet whatever he meets with there, which opposes his natural notions of the being or perfections of the Deity, as the one Supreme Good, gives his faith a wound which is not easily cured—he becomes perplexed with doubts and fears about the truth of it.—Thus, for instance, when he reads that the Christian doctrine teaches, that God is both three and one ; being unable to comprehend how this can be, it weakens the evidence of Scripture-Truth in general, and the essential Truths will proportionably abate their influence on his mind.—So if he reads that God rigidly demanded the blood of the offender, or his substitute —And that satisfaction to Divine Justice was made by *his* obedience to death, who *was himself* the Supreme GOD, the LEGISLATOR : Unable to make scholastic distinctions, and of course having no idea, or fancied idea, how this can be, he becomes full of doubts and fears —and as these absurdities, or the external evidences of Christianity, preponderate from time to time in his mind, he goes on doubting and believing all his days.—Miserable indeed is his fate ; for, not enjoying the well-grounded hope of eternal life, he is destitute of that comfort which flows from universal obedience : And thus, with thinking men at least, your system is hostile to their best interests, the establishment of peace and righteousness upon the earth.

But

But how does it happen with those whose faith was derived from their forefathers, and who consequently have not enough of it, to bear up against the impulse of those unnatural and contradictory notions? I will answer you :—They sink into INFIDELITY—Their faith will not bear violent concussions—they have no solid footing—they are unable to keep their place—they first doubt, and then deny the whole—they fall fearful victims at the shrine of Orthodoxy, probably never to rise any more !

This is not a fanciful picture—it is an awful and a grievous truth, chargeable upon the false religion, which has been obtruded into the place of the true Christian faith.—The benevolent God will, in due time, remove this cause.

And that which operates thus banefully upon those who are not disinclined to Christianity, will much more freely operate to prevent *Jews* and *Mahometans*, it's natural enemies, from even enquiring into it's evidences.—Taking it for granted that these errors are really parts of the Christian system, they will continue to do, what they have always hitherto done upon the same ground, detest it at first sight—refuse to examine its evidences—and cordially believe, that all its votaries are either knaves or fools.

Could they but hear the gospel's joyful sound—that there is but one God and Father of all ; who is

above all, and through all, and in all—and one Lord Jesus Christ, the anointed messenger of God.—Could they but hear that he hath proclaimed to all the world, the benevolent and pardoning nature of God—Could they but hear that vice will be punished with destruction, and that all the truly virtuous will inherit the glories of an everlasting world; they would leap for joy at the glorious report—they would magnify the goodness of God for this blessed prospect—and would become the chearful and obedient servants of his Christ!

I have taken, Sir, these pains, to shew upon what insubstantial ground it is, that your doctrine of the Trinity, and the divinity of Christ, do stand; in order that it may appear how little reason you had, for calling the *objections* of Antitrinitarians to those [sublime] mysteries, a *presumption**.

Some among your Readers will perhaps be found, who are not so willing as you appear to be, to believe without evidence.—And they will be inclined to think, that notwithstanding your ardent zeal in favour of orthodoxy, the CHURCH OF ENGLAND, as it now stands, will be in greater danger from the excision of those doctrines, than CHRISTIANITY itself can possibly be.—Some among your Readers, I think, will be found, who will pay more regard to sound reason, than to empty declamation; and they

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they will wish, that in the place of rhetorical figures, and dogmatical assertions, you had used something of the appearance, at least, of argument. — Perhaps some among them will see, that opinions are not therefore to be rejected, because of their coincidence with Mahometanism, or any other general system of reputed errors. — Some perhaps will contend, that however willing they are to make Reason stoop to Faith, they cannot believe, what they cannot understand — and these will probably consider your observation about the uncertainty of metaphysical arguments, as most applicable to Trinitarianism, which derives all its support from a fancied metaphysical distinction.

Some of your admirers will perhaps, in contradiction to your bold assertions, discover, that in that most ancient of the Creeds, the APOSTLE'S, not a syllable is said about the doctrine of the TRINITY, or the DIVINITY of Christ; and will offer to you a most powerful argument, founded on that Creed, against the notions you espouse: in that Jesus Christ is there so expressly distinguished from the one GOD the Father ALMIGHTY, the MAKER of *heaven and earth*. They will perhaps be inclined to consider your reproaches of novelty and strangeness, not as the result of rational conviction; but as an address to the passions, calculated to mislead the unwary, and to obscure the evidence of Truth. And having gone thus far, they may begin to suspect, that your
concep-

conceptions of the use and intent of the prophecies and miracles, recorded in the Scriptures, are not perfectly free from the taint of prejudice.

Nor should you wonder if some of them were to insist, that there is as much of GRACE and MERCY in the forgiveness of sin without an atonement, as there can be with it.—They will perhaps see, that it is as probable that God should commission one of his creatures, to proclaim his goodness to mankind, in their redemption from Sin and Death, as that he should be *his own* messenger.—They will perhaps see, that eternal life and enjoyment, the *ultimatum* of Divine Revelation, will be as truly eternal life and enjoyment, upon the Socinian scheme, as upon the scheme of Orthodoxy.—They will perhaps see, that the restoration of men to virtue and happiness in this life, is not more likely to take place upon the Orthodox scheme, than it is upon the Socinian; and that, if it does take place in the last instance, it will be at least equally consummate, as upon the former one.

And finally, perhaps they will be as much inclined to believe, that the doctrine *which* teaches the free and unmerited forgiveness of sins, arising out of God's own essential goodness, without any recompence or satisfaction made to him—*which* establishes, upon the firmest basis, the connection between vice and misery, virtue and happiness—*which* teaches the consequent necessity of universal virtue.

and benevolence—and *which* reveals to us, in the resurrection of Christ, the certain prospect of a happy immortality—is a GLORIOUS doctrine, a doctrine highly worthy the GREATEST and BEST of Beings, completely worthy of a particular Revelation, and of the long train of prophecies and stupendous miracles, that were wrought to introduce and establish it in the world :—As that the doctrine of a TRIFORM DEITY—of the SUPREME DEITY of the Messenger and Servant of the SUPREME DEITY—and of a full or partial oblation and satisfaction made to the DEITY, by HIMSELF—should be the doctrine of the Gospel, and call down from heaven the miraculous interposition of the SPIRIT of GOD.

I ardently hope that “ the universal dominion of Truth ” may be speedily established : and I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your most obedient,

And Most humble Servant,

Nov. 30th, 1789.

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